




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Townsville

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (2.20 pm): It seems that the LNP has learnt nothing, given the hypocrisy that we have just heard. The people of Townsville re-elected three Labor members. They re-elected us to put faith back into the community, because we are building job-generating infrastructure such as the \$250 million North Queensland stadium, the port expansion, the \$35 million Riverway Drive duplication and, of course, the \$225 million water pipeline. I remain astounded by the comments made by the member for Burdekin in this House a number of weeks ago about the member for Mulgrave, now the Speaker, that in his former role as treasurer he was no friend of the north. I say that \$1.2 billion spent on infrastructure between 2015 and now is putting Townsville and North Queensland on the map. Under the LNP and Campbell Newman, that spend was \$100 million. They did nothing in their time. However, the member for Burdekin will be on his feet after me, so maybe he will withdraw those comments because they are completely wrong.

Our Labor government is getting on with the job of delivering. In 2015 we came into government after Campbell Newman and the mining downturn, at a time when Townsville's unemployment rate was at 14 per cent. It is now at 8.3 per cent. We are getting on with the job. We have created 10,000 jobs in our time alone and we have more work to do. After recent weather events, in Townsville we know that water is a precious commodity. At the moment we are very happy, as today the Ross River Dam is at 87 per cent; just two weeks ago it was at 14 per cent. It seems that someone has lifted the dome off Townsville. It has been years since we have seen the type of rain we have experienced recently and there is more to come. However, it will not stop this Labor government from building the necessary infrastructure for water security through the \$225 million Townsville Haughton water pipeline project. Already local companies Premise, GHD and SMEC are employed as engineering project managers, employing some 30 people on design and engineering aspects of the pipeline.

It takes a Labor government to deliver in Townsville and that is exactly what we are doing. We will not stop. I acknowledge and commend the Townsville City Council for getting on with the tender process, which is expected to close this month. It will see local surveyors, hydrologists, welders, fabricators, excavators and transport businesses employed on that crucial infrastructure project. Why will locals get those jobs? Because of our state government's Buy Queensland policy, which enables local businesses to gain a 30 per cent weighting on government funded projects such as the pipeline. Importantly, the Haughton pipeline duplication project will deliver over 300 megalitres of water to Townsville when we need it. Even better, the project will create employment; it is estimated that it will deliver over 500 jobs. Historically in Queensland, the three levels of government have contributed one-third each to infrastructure projects, but our proud state Palaszczuk Labor government saw the urgent need to get on with the job and we have delivered \$225 million in funding for that water pipeline project.

As usual, we have heard nothing from the LNP, particularly in the federal space. Where is 'Malcolm in the middle'? Who knows! He has gone. We have received nothing from the federal government in regards to funding. Bill Shorten has put \$100 million on the table for stage 2. What about Malcolm? Where is he? What is he doing? Nothing! The LNP do not care about the people of Townsville. It is clear that only a collaboration between Labor governments will build the infrastructure required to ensure Townsville's water security for future generations. Our money is on the table. We are working closely with the member for Herbert to ensure funding for stage 2 from a future federal Labor government. We also know that when we get our policy settings right, such as the Buy Queensland procurement policy, we create local jobs.

You can sit there and talk about what you have done in your time. We came in after Campbell Newman, when unemployment in Townsville was at 14 per cent, which nearly killed us, and now it is down to 8.3 per cent. We will keep building government funded infrastructure that create jobs. We will get locals on those jobs while you sit there and moan and whinge and do nothing. You do not contribute to Townsville. You do not care about Townsville. We will keep building.